demo

january 2013 / issue 9

Showdown:
Are band reunions good or bad?

Working in Music
Why a U of T music degree can take you places

Westsiiiiiiiiide! Of Toronto?
Exploring Hip-Hop in GTA Suburbs

Photo credit: Frank Ocean by Terry Richardson

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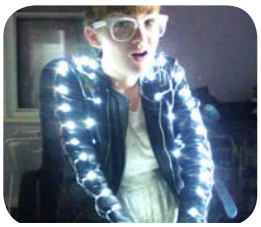

Letter from the Editor

If there is one thing that love of music has brought me, it is a sense of community. As fun as it is to sit in your room and dance around to your iTunes (okay, let's be real, I do this a lot. Especially to the new Born Gold album these past few months, as I'll tell you on page 23), there is really nothing like getting outside and connecting with fellow enthusiasts.

I think this is why I love live music so much. This month marks my one year anniversary writing show reviews for a local music blog (shameless self-promotion: google Grayowl Point!). This has led to some amazing opportunities, from hitting my summer goal to see 100 different bands, to interviewing and getting to know some musicians I was a fan of, to helping to book and promote a concert. The more I throw myself into Toronto's vibrant music community, the more I find to love.

Toronto really does have something special going. Sure, it is the biggest city in Canada, but I think that there is more to it than that. There are multiple overlapping scenes and groups of people. Into a niche subgenre of experimental electronica? Cool, me too, and you'll probably find kindred spirits no matter what your musical poison. A huge city with many, many venues might seem overwhelming at first. A year ago, when I started going to shows alone in full force, I felt terribly anonymous. But after pushing myself to get to know people, to relentlessly explore and chase after whatever music made me happy, I really do feel at home in Toronto's concert scene. I'm more comfortable in a small crowd around a stage than I would be at home in a pair of sweatpants (I don't wear sweatpants. As Emily will tell you on page 26, my preferred uniform of cardigans and combat boots might have a lot to do with the music I listen to).

Any talk of music and community brings me right back to Demo. This year's team is everything I could have hoped for. Right from the first meeting, full of arguments about Jack White, I knew that we were forming something special. After a semester's worth of weekly meetings (part brainstorming session, part spending time with our newfound musical friends), I really do believe that we are a community. What binds us together is an obsessive love of music.

In this issue, we have investigated a huge variety of music communities, including U of T (we profile three talented student musicians on page 4, and look at the school's role in shaping alumni on page 10), Toronto (we give you an overview of the city's open mic nights on page 18), the GTA (our cover story investigates hip-hop in the suburbs on page 20), and beyond (including a musician's comparison between our city and Boston on page 8).

Be sure to check out our online edition throughout the semester (find us at **demomagazine.ca**, and on twitter as **@demoharthouse**) for album and show reviews, more opinion pieces, and bonus content to most of the articles you are holding in your hands.

Finally, thank you to Hart House, to all of our lovely contributors, and to my co-editor Emily. I think that, together, we've really created something special.

Cheers, Elena

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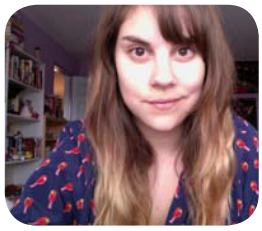


Letter from the Editor

Until I joined this magazine, I never considered myself a true music lover. I have no idea why – I have been playing piano and any other instrument I could get my hands on since I was a child, and I have always felt uncomfortable in silence when there could be music playing. I used to draw music notes in my notebooks and write poetic lyrics for instrumental songs that I would compose in my head. But still, I never considered myself a music lover.

Demo Magazine changed this view that I held of myself. It was not until the weekly Demo meetings began that I suddenly discovered how much I love discussing music, as well as being around people who appreciate music as much as I do. The discussions our newly formed community had ranged from serious discussions about recent shows we had attended, to ridiculous abduction plots of Jack White and Cadence Weapon (we were kidding…kind of).

I think it is perhaps in these meetings when I realized what I would do for music, and what music does for me; a lot of my stress can easily be attributed to Demo (as well as school, but that's another thing entirely), so why do I continue as an editor and contributor? I know the answer: because music, just like for many other listeners, has gotten me through some hard times as well as evoked feelings of absolute optimism and joy. Music is something I find deeply personal, but incredibly universal. And to be able to share this experience with others who feel the exact same as I do about music – about the importance of listening to blues rock, of being aware of the discourses within hip-hop, and of falling in love with the live music experience – is something incredibly special to me.

So, if you are like I was, and you do not consider yourself a rabid music fan, then maybe you are wrong. Pick up this magazine, leaf through it, and take some time to consider all the undeniably various factions of life that music trickles into; consider the pros and cons of band reunions (pages 14-15), learn about the current dialogue surrounding homosexuality within hip-hop (page 19), and discover what suburban music has to offer (pages 20-22).

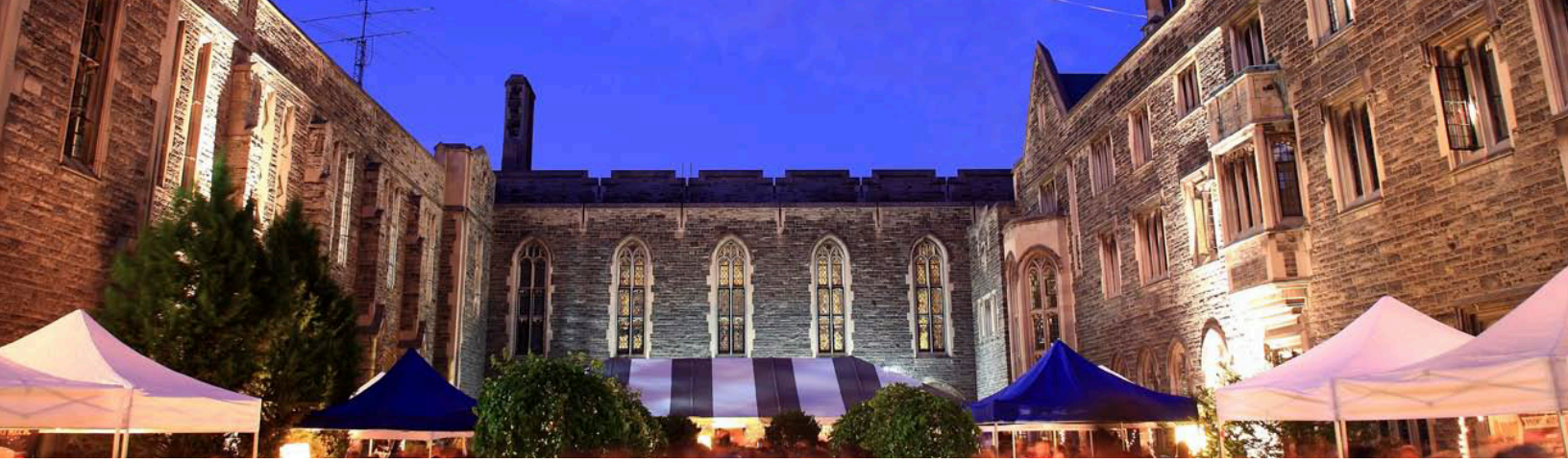
These articles and more are between the covers of this magazine, which would not have been possible without Hart House, as well as Zoe Dille, our Hart House liaison. Further thanks need to be given to our Demo contributors who literally wrote this magazine. Finally, I must thank my co-editor Elena, the best and most encouraging editor in the world.

And so maybe this is not just a letter from an editor, but it is instead a love letter to music. Music truly fascinates me, as it has provided me with much more than just sound in my ears – it has provided me with a connection to others, as well as a much-needed outlet for emotional expression. Now I know that I consider myself a lover of music, for everything that it has been for me, and everything that it will be for me in the future.

Enjoy!
Emily

Layout Editor

Jenny Hong
Jenny is a second year Master's student at University of Toronto. She will be graduating this year. Her research project focuses on unraveling the protein-protein interactions within the ubiquitin system. She plays both the cello and piano. She has been with Demo for three years and enjoys doing layout work. Currently, she is listening to Bruno Mars.



In the House - Message from the Hart House Staff Advisor

The Hart House vision states that Hart House is a place where all voices, rhythms, and traditions converge, and there is no time of year that better exemplifies this sentiment than the start of a new school year. It's an electric time with new hopes, ambitions, and promise mixed in with nervousness and a little anxiety from the students who know what to expect or who are finishing up and wondering what their next move will be mixed in for good measure. Whatever it is you can feel it in the air, and it's what all staff at Hart House look forward to. Only a few months ago I could gaze out my office window and see a courtyard with readers, loungers, shade-seekers, and visitors; there is always a quiet-ness to the summer period – the calm before the storm. When I made my way down to the CNE in August I remember thinking that this was not just marking the end of summer but also the beginning of another school year; growing up with a birthday that usually falls around Labour Day weekend I am accustomed to looking forward to something with both anticipation and trepidation.

As soon as the reality of fall sets in the campus comes alive with sights, sounds, smells, and experiences of Frosh Week and Orientation activities. Our front desk staff dive in head-first answering questions, providing directions, selling bus tickets, registering fitness classes and club memberships, booking squash courts and basketball time, and everything in between! Line ups snake along the hallways for various services, club memberships, and events, and there is a general energy of organized chaos throughout the halls of Hart House. As the centre for experiential learning, collaborative leadership, and student engagement, Hart House really becomes itself when the influx of students, graduates, staff, faculty, and our community friends come together to connect in this shared and welcoming space.

This year was a bit different for me as I was on a short-term leave for part of this term—rather than being at the forefront of many events and activities I watched virtually from the sidelines, checking out the various activities online and checking in from home while in recovery mode. Seeing it from the outside in gave me a different perspective and made me see that when dedicated staff and enthusiasm and great ideas from students collide, this is the sweet spot where the magic happens.

This issue of Demo marks the fourth time there has been a changing of the guard on the editorial front. Demo was born from the initiative of a single student several years ago and since then it has become the catalyst for building a thriving community of writers, artists, layout designers, and music lovers who support each other and create interesting issues. Demo contributors have gone on to intern at various publications, pursue writing careers and post graduate studies, and become just overall awesome citizens! Best of all many of these folks have become friends; case in point our editing team from last year met as members of the music committee, became best friends, shared an apartment, and are still in touch with each other after graduation. I see similar possibilities for this year's editing team as well. This embodies what Hart House is all about and is in alignment with our values: Learning, Connections, Holism, and Stewardship. My thanks to a firecracker team of co-editors-in-chief, Elena and Emily, and all contributors to Demo, you're all keeping the dream alive.

Warm Regards,
Zoe Dille
Programme Coordinator and Demo Reader, Hart House
Staff Advisor, Music Committee

Student Musician Profiles

We live in a city full of creativity and music: you do not need to look far to find guitars being strummed, synthesizers plugged in, or drum beats being kept. U of T students are multitalented, many of them pursuing music outside of the classroom. Our contributors sat down with a few excellent examples to pick their brains.

Petra Nikolaou

Year of Study: 3rd
Program: Music Performance
Instrument: Clarinet
Favourite Genre to Play: Classical
Favourite Musician: Sabine Meyer
Biggest Influences: Paul Newman, Kinneret Sagee, James Campbell

With Whom She Has Performed:
U of T Wind Symphony, U of T Wind Ensemble, TDSB Youth Orchestra and Band, Toronto Youth Wind Orchestra, Orford Festival Wind Octet, Corktown Chamber Orchestra, Chinese Cultural Centre Orchestra, The Woodchoppers Association

What is The Woodchoppers Association? This group is comprised of musicians from all backgrounds who play a variety of instruments. The concept is that they improvise as a group; there is no written music or idea discussed before. Through listening, more organised musical ideas emerge and develop. Petra believes that improvisational skills are important for any musician, but finds that they are especially helpful to a classical player, as learning to improvise develops one's confidence in performing for an audience and one's ability to listen to oneself and to others.

Proudest Moment/Greatest Achievement: The moment after her first Woodchoppers performance. Petra discovered that even though she was terrified of having to play without music in front of her, she was capable of doing so, and actually enjoyed it. The experience allowed her to realize her own creative potential.

Plans for the Future:
Long-term: Petra plans on getting her Master's Degree in Performance.
Short-term: Catch Petra performing with The Woodchoppers Association at the Tranzac on the first Sunday of every month, and stay tuned for her Solo Recital at Father Madden Hall on March 30th.

Maria Sokulsky-Dolnycky
3rd year Linguistics, German, Music History & Culture. Enjoys cycling, travelling, rediscovering nature, reading, and watching films. Favourite musical genres include indie, experimental, art rock, and Balkan gypsy music.

Molly Thomason

Age: 18
Year: 1st
Program: Sexual Diversity Studies
From: Nova Scotia
Weapons of Choice: Guitar and her beautiful voice
Genre: Pop rock
Biggest Influences: Bob Dylan and Joan Jett/The Runaways

Favorite Thing about U of T: "I love how the campus is integrated into the city; the university does a really good job of giving students access to things happening in Toronto. The university community and the city community are well integrated, and that's a really attractive part of U of T."

Molly Thomason is a songwriter, singer, and guitarist hailing from New Scotland. Born in Sidcup, England, she made the Atlantic voyage at the age of two with naught but her wits and two cases of Huggies. She first picked up a guitar in grade six to learn "Iris" by the Goo Goo Dolls. Since then, she's released two albums: *Through the Static* and *Beauty Queen*. She is currently working on a third album, which is being produced by John-Angus MacDonald, lead guitarist for the Trews. So keep your ears open! Molly often plays shows at the Supermarket on Augusta and College. Keep updated with her website: http://www.mollythomason.ca/.

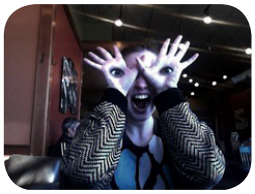
Erik Masson
Erik is in third year studying History and Classical Civilizations. Believing rock n' roll to be the answer to most of life's questions, Erik studies it fervently, more so than his actual area of study.

Amity Beach

With a sweet, relaxed sound and a trumpet, Amity Beach is developing into one of Canada's up-and-coming indie bands and now has a connection to the University of Toronto. Though the band calls Grand Bend home, Amity Beach's front man, Geoff Baillie, is a freshman at Victoria College. Baillie is the band's lead vocalist, one of two guitarists, and resident glockenspiel-er.

The five-piece labels themselves as "bright indie rock," which is quite accurate, given the vocal likeness to Givers and the resemblance of their vibrant sound to that of Motherwolf, Tokyo Police Club, and Belle & Sebastian. Given the ease with which Amity Beach fits in with these popular artists, they seem well positioned for future success. Baillie quotes Grizzly Bear and Tokyo Police Club as inspirations for their quirky pop sound which easily reflects their beach-town roots.

The band released its first EP in the summer of 2011. Self-titled, the song set was a collection of three sunny pop rock songs. The band next released a live EP in the spring of 2012, once again self-titled. This featured three equally cheery songs, but what next? For the time being, the band is spread out across several cities and universities. So for now, the world will have to go without a live performance from Amity Beach, however the band does plan to tour consistently over the summer to raise enough money to produce a full-length album. Long-term, Baillie says that the band hopes to sign with a small Toronto-based label. As far as song writing goes, Baillie hopes to grow the band's sound from "cutesy" to something more complex and mature through the use of different lyrical patterns and themes. For now, though, Amity Beach provides a sunny, sandy escape from the hum-drum of daily life and the chilling cold of impending winter.



Sian Last
Sian is a first year student studying at Victoria College. She loves experimenting with different kinds of music and will go to any concert that is under $15. She hopes to major in art history and pursue curatorial work after college, or just become the CEO of Pitchfork, either one would work.

A New Space for Artists: Supportindependentmusic.org

Photo credit: supportindependentmusic.org

Toronto is a music sweet spot where new and developed artists can team up in novel ways to share their craft with fans. However, this is relatively difficult for many, given the financial obstacles that often inhibit the production and creation of music. This is especially true for independent musicians, who may hope to remain free from the influence of corporate sponsors. Fortunately, in the past decade there has been renewed social interest in the sustenance of independent music. With services such as Kickstarter, which allows anyone to finance a project through online support collected from friends and fans, it is now easier for musicians and fans to create and support the music they love, therefore making it slightly easier for independent musicians to get their work heard.

In the Toronto area, an organization has developed called Supportindependentmusic.org which follows this trend of independent support. This organization aims to support the city's local and independent music scene. The project is intended to create a space in which members of all fields of the independent music industry can meet and access resources at a kind of crossroads. According to Taymore Balba, a professor of design at Ryerson University and SIM.org's campaign leader, the project is "not [to create] a new centre but a necessary shelter to house what already exists." The ideal designs for this new space show venues, teaching, networking, and research areas all intended to be housed in reoccupied space.

The movement is currently spearheaded by an organization called StudioFeed, which is defined by three main components: technology, events, and media. That is to say that the organization works with a variety of other groups. These groups include the Stephen Lewis foundation to create media awareness regarding HIV/AIDS in Uganda and the Montreal-based media company Mutech to create and facilitate projects in all three of these categories. Other partners in the project are Atelier3am, which designed the concept space for the headquarters of SIM.org, along with the University of the Ontario College of Art and Design, which is developing technologies related to tactile sound.

This is a grassroots movement; it is not championed by wealthy, corporate sponsors, but it is instead supported by the people who will benefit the most from the fruits of this project. SIM.org is a community of volunteers bringing forward their individual experiences and fields of expertise to create a place of acceptance and connection for Toronto's musicians. As such, for the movement to succeed, it is in the hands of passionate individuals. Getting involved is as simple as joining the internet community at supportindependentmusic.org, attending the organization's planning meeting held every few weeks, or making an effort to buy the music of local artists. At the end of the day, Balba states, "We feel this message is universal to all demographics. In the end we are trying to find a communal way to deliver this message…[the] critical mass of people interested in music here in Toronto deserves better."

-Sian Last

A Tale of Two Cities:
An Interview with Boston/Toronto's
Robbie Wulfsohn

Robbie Wuflsohn is the front-man of Ripe, a Boston-based jam band of eight merry minstrels who formed in typical jam band style: a spontaneous living-room jam session. Featuring two guitarists, a drummer, a bassist, a trombonist, a trumpeter, and a saxophonist in addition to Wuflsohn, the band plays the bar scene in downtown Boston. Hailing from ThornHill, Wuflsohn moved to Boston to attend Berklee College of Music. Despite only singing for Ripe, he plays guitar, piano, vocals, drums, bass, and saxophone. He has done some recording work in both cities. We managed to corner him to talk about some of the challenges in, and differences between, Boston and Toronto.

Demo: Being 18, do you have to just play a lot of all-ages events, or do you lie about your age to play at drinking-age venues? If so, do you find one city to be more lax about the law than the other?

Robbie Wuflsohn: In terms of bars, there are places that function as concert venues that are easy to get into because all they do is book shows. To have places that are cool enough to have audiences already there who are there to drink, that's basically impossible, regardless of the city, unless you can drink. Obviously in Toronto it's easier to play at those awesome venues, because you hit 19 before you hit 21. But that's only for that specific type of venue, which, while awesome, is not the only kind out there. I find Toronto is trying to be like New York and have tons and tons of venues, which is good. Boston is a different scene; it's not trying to be New York, and it probably couldn't [be] if it tried. And so, you get very different opportunities. In many ways, it's much harder in a city like Boston. But that the same time, if you make it in Toronto, there's a ceiling; if you make it in Boston, there's no ceiling.

> "I think Toronto is making a concerted effort to establish itself as a music city."

D: Do you find there are any marked differences in terms of what challenges musicians face in each city?

RW: In Toronto, one of the problems is finding places that will book you … there's this vibe that you need to know someone in order to get that first step. In Boston, there are so many bands and so many reputable places that bands come from that you can get a sh***y gig with almost no effort. And in Toronto, even the sh***y gigs take some work.

D: Do you find the crowds/venues in one city are better than in the other?

RW: The only experience I have with a totally organic audience (that wasn't just people I know and could sell tickets to) in Toronto were those Monday nights at the Painted Lady, which is one of my favorite places to play and has an amazing vibe. The short answer is I'm not entirely sure, but in my experience the potential in Toronto is much greater than that of Boston. I think Toronto is making a concerted effort to establish itself as a music city. So, a lot of places are seeing that happen and are trying to be good enough to be "that place", and it will change over time. Certain places will [come] out on top and others will fall by the wayside or change hands. It happened recently with the El Mocambo. But Toronto has a lot of places that are trying, so the bar is going to tend to be higher.

D: Which city do you prefer playing in?

RW: My favorite place I've played is those Monday nights at the Painted Lady. It's

completely different from every other thing I've ever done.

D: Do you find there are any styles that are more prevalent in one city over another?

RW: Not really; because Boston is such a huge college town, it has a much stronger bend towards college-age sh**; Toronto has more of a mix. All of those genres that college kids tend to get into absolutely kill in Boston, in a way that I've never seen them do in Toronto. There are so many people who will go out to see a DJ, because people come from all around the world, and they're all college kids. In the city itself and around the concert venues, if you can appeal to the 18-24 age group, you are rolling in it.

D: Okay, so I know you've done work recording a solo EP here in Toronto. Are you also doing any recording with Ripe in Boston?

RW: Yeah, there's a place we can book out and bring our own people to, and we used the Berklee studios once. The benefit of the first one is that we have total creative control, we just bring the people we want and rent the space out. However, the school studios are close, and they're free. The negatives are plentiful, but all outweighed by the fact that it's right down the street and doesn't cost money.

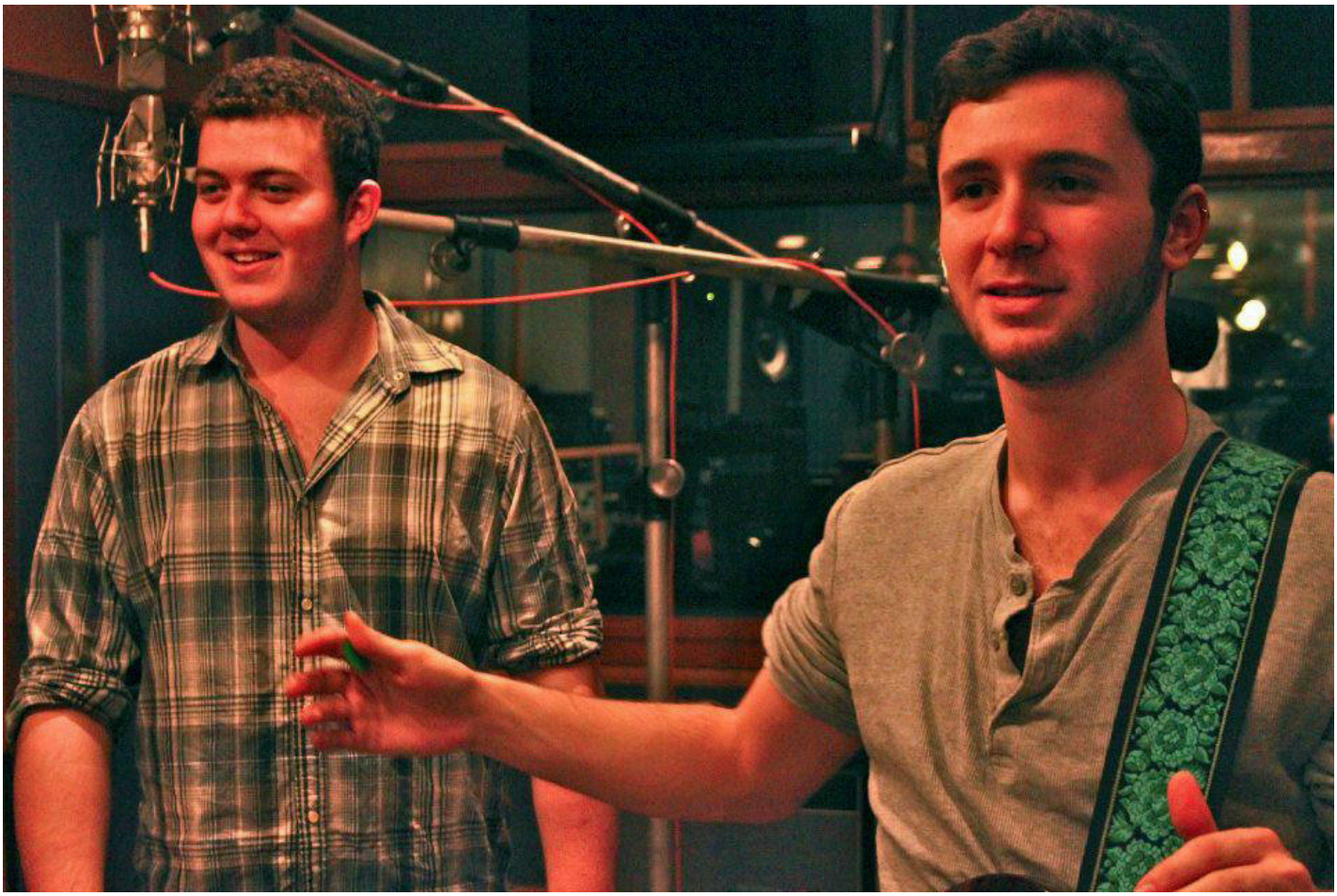
D: What's your favorite part of the recording process, and least favorite?

RW: They both come from the same place, which is the need to make things perfect and exactly how you want them. The best part is nailing that, it's getting that vocal take and going, "That's it, yeah!" And the worst part is those moments when you just cannot get what you want, you can't get it to sound on the record the way it does in your head, and that f**ks with you. Because at this point for us, it's always time, it's usually money, and a lot of the time there's some risk involved in terms of thinking we can get it done and gambling that we actually can. And so in this stage, where it's not a studio bankroll, it's what can we afford to pay, and it's stressful when you just aren't getting the results you want.

D: What are the future plans for the band?

RW: We're lucky enough to have eight totally different networks in the band, and everybody has those two or three guys that, when we're ready, we can show it to. So we're gonna wait until we're totally ready, until this EP reflects how totally f***ing prepared we are to really take on the industry, then we're gonna pull in all these people at that right moment.

-Erik Masson



Why a U of T music degree can take you places

It takes a lot to be a music student, but hours spent refining techniques and learning pieces can pay off when talent and effort are woven together to create beautiful, haunting, or inspiring works of art. Studying music would seem to be a preparation for a career in classical performance. While there are quite a few names of University of Toronto alumni proudly displayed on the member-lists of orchestras, symphonies, and opera companies (even a look at the admissions brochure for the Faculty of Music presents a list of distinguished alumni working in the field), the small number of spaces and competitive nature causes a large proportion of students to turn elsewhere.

Thankfully, there is no shortage of opportunities for U of T grads looking to work in music, from turning to more independent or pop-based forms, to music education, to working in the industry doing promotion or PR. There are alumni all over the map, using their education and experience and applying it to a diverse set of fields.

The University of Toronto offers a wide variety of undergraduate and graduate degrees in music, including performance (jazz or classical), composition, music education, and more theoretical disciplines such as music history and musicology. The program includes foundational courses in history and theory, as well as required participation in an ensemble. By the end of the degree, students have experienced small class sizes and close instruction in their area of interest.

Naturally, students pick up a wide variety of skills over the course of their degree. Reflecting on his U of T experience, jazz drummer Ernesto Cervini says, "I kind of learned the nuts and bolts about being a musician. I didn't know much about theory and composition when I got here … just learning how to be a musician in general was a big thing." Guitarist Don Scott agrees, "I came to school fairly weak in the music theory department, so it was good to have that grounding and really break down all the different points of how it fits together … [Musicians] deal with a lot of chords and scales and melodies and stuff, and just to be able to tell them all apart, it was good to have drills, drills, drills drilled into our head." These technical aspects are difficult to learn without the catalyst that an education provides.

Most university students in any program will tell you that the most important things they learned came not from textbooks, but from the experience of connecting to peers and becoming more independent. The same holds true for music grads, and being surrounded by people who eat, sleep, and breathe music for four years can be extremely rewarding. "I think one of the greatest things about being in school is that it's a gathering of all these people who have the same interest as you," Cervini says. "You're all in the same head space. It's your time to do it, and get your stuff together, and learn, and play. It's lovely." Beyond just having people to jam with, the connections made at school can lead to the formation of bands and projects that can last for years after convocation.

> "There are alumni all over the map, using their education and experience and applying it to a diverse set of fields."

Why U of T specifically? For one, it exists in the middle of a vibrant city, with no shortage of musical opportunities. Studying in Toronto allows you to experiment with different arts scenes every night if you wanted to: catch the TSO, see a play, watch a big-name touring artist, delve into the underground indie scene. Devouring influences from all sides is great for creativity, and Toronto is a city that allows you to do that in all forms. Of course, there is also the strength of the program. U of T is consistently well-ranked in Canada and worldwide for

a good reason: the huge amount of research that goes on in the St. George campus buildings attracts world-class staff to introduce students into their field. The strength of the faculty then draws in talented students. "I was sort of attracted to the teachers that were at the program at U of T," Scott says. "I just knew it was a really strong music program, just to get me out in the world and have a career."

Modern music is full of examples of our alumni who have launched into imaginative career paths. Brandi Sydoryk (BMus 2005) translated her self-confessed band geek-ery into her band Sidney York, bringing in bassoon and ukulele to create charming, whimsical indie pop. Lemon Bucket Orkestra, Toronto's only "balkan-klezmer-gypsy-party-punk-superband" features alumni including Rob Teehan (MusBacPerf 2005), Karl Silviera (MusBacPerf 2009), and Mike Romaniak (MusBacPerf 2011). Owen Pallett (BMus Composition 2002) creates violin-based looped and layered records under his own name, as well as doing string arrangements for everyone from Grizzly Bear to Arcade Fire.

With more graduates emerging each year equipped with theoretical know-how and creative confidence, it is exciting to think how they are going to push music in new directions. Whether crafting an amazing album, supporting the industry by working at a record label or venue, or going into elementary and high schools to inspire the next generation to take up music, U of T's alumni are well-prepared to tackle the future in front of them.

"The interesting thing about a music degree is it's not the type of degree where you can show the piece of paper and get a job, because it just doesn't work that way," reflects Cervini. "But, I don't think there was any way that I would be able to get where I am without having gone through the process. It's the skills and the people you meet … this amazing environment where you're put in, where you just learn."

-Elena Gritzan

Women Who Rock

It's time to honour some of the fierce ladies in rock, past and present. In a primarily male-dominated scene, it is not always easy for women to establish themselves as tough rockers that are just as legitimate as their male counterparts, but these gals have worked hard to successfully do just that. Their confidence and talent are admirable and each one is responsible for some incredible tunes.

Photo credit: Baron Wolman via Rolling Stone

1 Janis Joplin

Bands: Big Brother and The Holding Company, solo artist
Era: 1960s
Town: San Francisco, CA
Style: Soulful psychedelic rock
Essential Track: "Ball and Chain" (1967)
Janis Joplin is a good choice for obvious reasons. A total powerhouse, her raspy voice oozes with emotion, and her self-assured stage presence is inspiring. Her raw, bluesy sound was a big hit in the 1960s and still continues to deeply impact listeners.

Photo credit: Kevin Cummins

2 Courtney Love

Band: Hole
Era: 1990s
Town: Seattle, WA
Style: Alternative, Grunge
Essential Track: "Violet" (1994)
While you may roll your eyes at her crazy antics and zany attempts at attracting the media's attention, Courtney Love really is one talented and ballsy chick. Her band, Hole, was wildly successful during the grunge explosion of the '90s, with loud, commanding songs and vocals featuring her signature growl. The band seamlessly combines influences of both hard rock and power pop into their music, making for accessible and impactful songs.

Photo credit: Jim Marshall

3 Grace Slick

Bands: Jefferson Airplane, Jefferson Starsh
Era: 1960s
Style: Psychedelic rock
Essential Track: "Somebody to Love" (1967)
A deep, rich voice and unapologetic swagger earns Grace Slick h
product of the 1960s psychedelic rock craze, her band, Jefferson
out songs that became anthems of the decade. From the minut
their 1967 album *Surrealistic Pillow*, you will be hooked.

Photo credit: packad.com

4 Becky Black and Maya Miller

Band: The Pack A.D.
Era: Current
Town: Vancouver, BC
Style: Garage Rock
Essential Track: "Sirens" (2011)
The Pack A.D. may only use guitar and drums, but their music is certainly not lacking. With driving beats and explosive choruses in every song, the Canadian duo has plenty of power. Singer Becky Black's dark but upbeat vocals make for tunes that will stick around in your head, and the drummer, Maya Miller, will have you tapping your foot each time you listen.

5 Amanda Zelina

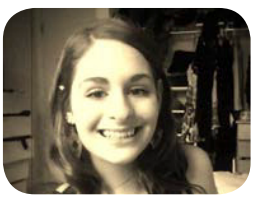
Photo credit: thecopportone.com

Band: The Coppertone
Era: Current
Town: King City, ON
Style: Blues rock
Essential Track: "I Know the Dead" (2011)
The Coppertone is a remarkable Canadian band that draws from old-fashioned blues and gives it a modern rock twist. Singer and guitarist Amanda Zelina has a warm, smoky voice that is perfectly paired with the fuzzed-out guitars and pounding drums, making for music that is impossible to stay still to. Zelina gets extra points for her capabilities on slide guitar, as well as her cool vintage look.

More Ladies and Their Best Tracks
Kim Deal: The Breeders, The Pixies – "Cannonball" (1993), "Gigantic" (1988)
Emma Richardson: Band of Skulls – "I Know What I Am" (2010)
Nancy and Ann Wilson: Heart – "Crazy on You" (1976)
Stevie Nicks: Fleetwood Mac – "The Chain" (1977)
Feist: "How Come You Never Go There" (2012)
Kathleen Hanna: Bikini Kill – "Rebel Girl" (1992)
Alison Mosshart: The Kills – "Future Starts Slow" (2011)

hip

her rightful place on this list. A
Airplane, had a knack for churning
e you hear Slick's eerie crooning on



Aviva Lev-Aviv
Aviva is a first year humanities student who is crazy about all things music, especially seeing live shows and dreaming of seeing her favourite band, Led Zeppelin. She loves to discover new artists and make music herself. Also on her list of favourites are peanut butter, her three incredible sisters, and doing Bob Dylan impressions.

Opinion

Are Band Reunions a Good Idea?

Band Reunions are a **Terrible Idea**

Band reunions have overwhelmingly sucked. Motivated by financial desires, bands that have imploded for the usual variety of reasons (drugs, sex, money, the fact that they all hate each other, et cetera) take a look at their dwindling sales and bank accounts and decide to get back together for as long as they can stand each other's company.

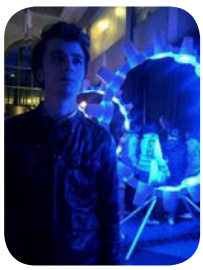
But the problem does not lie exclusively in lacklustre performances by artists who should know better. It is in the ramifications reunions have on what can be considered a dying industry - dying not from lack of creative, challenging artists, but dying due to the widespread acceptance of music piracy. Piracy in a less and less financially viable music industry, combined with a proliferation of reunions, can only serve to cultivate a culture of regurgitation as opposed to one of creativity.

We have to remember that the music industry is an industry that adheres to the rules of the market place, in that declining revenue can negatively impact the ways in which a record label operates. The costs of producing, promoting, and recording an artist can sometimes be astoundingly high. With less and less revenue coming in from new album sales, labels have less incentive to take risks on new talent. Enter the reunion. Reunions allow for a label to continue re-issuing the same material over and over again in order to appeal to a new audience. Eventually, labels choose to prioritize older recordings and bands as opposed to scouting for new talent. Many labels have popped up as exclusively re-issue-centric, typically choosing to use vinyl or other anachronistic medias to drive sales. How do reunions play into all of this? Increased revenues from endless re-issues convince band to reunite. Then the same pattern is followed: band reunites, sales increase, the label continues to look for older talent to dust off, and the endless cycle continues.

These bands - with the rare exception - do not consider recording new material, because it is a matter of incentive. If an artist can sell out a stadium based on an album recorded years ago, why even bother recording new material? The audience is there for the classics, to hear the songs they remember from years past or are played ad nauseum on FM radio. Most reunions rely on set lists devoted entirely to old material. Perhaps it's the audience that is to blame. After all, we are the fans and we determine the financial future of a band. Perhaps it is a reciprocal relation; we demand our greatest hits and the band complies, and we feel good so we buy more albums and merchandise. Again this all serves to create an environment that supports the endless cycle.

Some may raise the argument that reunions allow for new audiences to engage with older bands and vice versa. This is all well and good until one considers the average ticket price. While many smaller bands play smaller, cheaper venues, stadium bands often charge premium prices for even the nosebleed seating. This raises the question of who can actually afford to buy these tickets? Using broad generalizations, older middle class types with the disposable income to make that kind of purchase. Younger people are often employed in low-level service jobs if they are employed at all, or they are attending some form of financially burdensome education. The appeal here then is to the older fans, who may drag the kids along if they see fit. Thus, the younger element is less prevalent than some may argue.

Throughout my argument, I'm sure a few questions and eyebrows were raised. Am I one to say that no band should ever reform? Absolutely not. But do band reunions usually suck? Yes. They suck for a wide variety of reasons; from aging performers to incomplete bands fleshed out with studio musicians, the reunion can be a trying effort for the listener. However, some do rise above the mediocrity encouraged by reunions; Dinosaur Jr. and Swans have all reunited but continued to push boundaries and release excellent material. Thus the quality of the reunion is entirely dependent on the quality of the band. However, I am opposed to reunions fundamentally because they encourage us to turn away from new talent and continue to worship the same artists our parents did. This is to the detriment of not only the young blood but also to the ignorant masses who will not be exposed to new talent through the traditional means as labels continually look backwards for further revenue.



Adam Bernhardt
Adam is a third year History specialist. Adam is an inherently uncreative person, thus the only joy he finds in life is ruthlessly criticizing those who are. When not panhandling, he can often be found hanging around Queen and Ossington. He likes candle-lit dinners and long walks on the beach. He once shoved Adrienne Clarkson to get to some Jello at a banquet as a child. It was lacklustre.

Photo credit: Jesus and Mary Chain by Eva Blue

Band Reunions are Great

There is a certain magic to seeing a band live. There really is nothing quite like it; you are surrounded by people who are all there to see the same thing you are, and the audience is brought together to see an awesome band play awesome music and have an awesome time. That is why I can never hate band reunions - the concert experience is truly unbeatable.

For most musicians, music is all they do. They do not have a nine-to-five job like most people, so I can understand their desire to put all their time into their music. Further, I can understand if, after a band splits up, they get bored and want to get back together to tour again.

On the other hand, a lot of people argue that it would be better if reunited bands would make new music, which brings me to my next point: a lot of them do! There are plenty of bands that reunite for tours and then end up making another album or new songs, like the Rolling Stones recently have. Instead of considering the band as "split up," this can easily be perceived by the fans as the band coming out with more material after a gap of time where they did not necessarily consider themselves a band.

Even if a band does reunite just to tour with their old material, I do not necessarily consider that a bad thing; I know that I and many others would pay large amounts of money to see Led Zeppelin play again. Further, the band knows their fans would pay large amounts of money to see them play, so if they chose to tour again, then they could charge large amounts of money for tickets. They would be happy, and the fans would be happy. Reunions are also a great opportunity for younger fans to see older bands play that they never had the opportunity to see tour in their prime. For example, my roommate saw John Fogherty, who is still playing old Creedence Clearwater Revival tunes, and he had an amazing time.

Another thing to consider is that, sometimes, the new material that reuniting bands make is actually really good. Rush continued to produce great material after their hiatus, Bruce Springsteen and the E Street Band had *The Rising*, and Phish had *Joy*. I certainly do not think that everything about band reunions is good - sometimes musicians just cannot pull off what they used to, and they have a hard time realizing that. However, there are definitely good things that can come out of reunions, and at the end of the day, if the fans like it, they will pay to see it. If enough people want to pay the Stones hundreds of dollars to play their old hits, I cannot fault the Stones for giving the people what they want.

-Erik Masson

Music, Politics, and the Brain: ***What's Influencing YOU?***

It has always been assumed that music carries an incredible ability to invoke emotion and memories, but recent advances in neuroscience have now established this as a fact. The best-selling book *This Is Your Brain On Music* by Daniel J. Levitin delves into this phenomenon and explains it in layman's terms. Levitin notes that the cerebellum and amygdala in the human brain are at the centre of emotion. When we hear melodies and sounds that are pleasing to these centres, we feel enjoyable and pleasant emotions as a result. In contrast, listening to dissonant melodies and sounds commonly invokes upset or even angry feelings. These reactions have been passed down from our ancestors through evolution – the same mechanism that produced fear and anger in response to a predator's hunting cry now makes that one annoying song on the radio particularly jarring.

It is obvious that, because of this ability to affect listeners so deeply, music filters into all aspects of life. This includes aspects such as how we exercise, what we read, and even whom we vote for. Music and politics have always been intensely interwoven in many different ways. For example, there are bands that make politics the subject of their music, such as U2 and the Clash, and there are also genres that are devoted entirely to the intersection of music and politics, such as anti-war music or topical songs, songs that draw attention to past or current political and social events. The use of politics as subject matter in music can be both manipulative and useful, as it may influence listeners, but also inform them of important world events.

> "These [emotional] reactions [to melodies and sounds] have been passed down from our ancestors through evolution..."

A good example of this is Bob Dylan's topical song "Hurricane," which was written about the wrongful incarceration of Rubin "Hurricane" Carter, a professional boxer who was charged for a triple murder during a robbery. Racism was apparently a determining factor in the arrest and trial, and this fact was popularized through Dylan's song. He sings, "Though they could not produce the gun/The DA said he was the one who did the deed/And the all-white jury agreed." Dylan released the song on his 1976 album *Desire*, making Carter's case well known to the public and thus helping him appeal for a fair retrial.

While this may be a good use of influential music, perhaps the most manipulative use is in political campaigns. As stated by Deane Root, a professor of music at the University of Pittsburgh, for the Pittsburgh Post-Gazette, "a political rally that doesn't use music can sound hollow and incomplete." As a result, music is now a staple of political rallies, and as its use has become more popularized, it has been established that using the *right* music primes the audience to "take on attitudes toward whatever else they may be seeing or hearing."

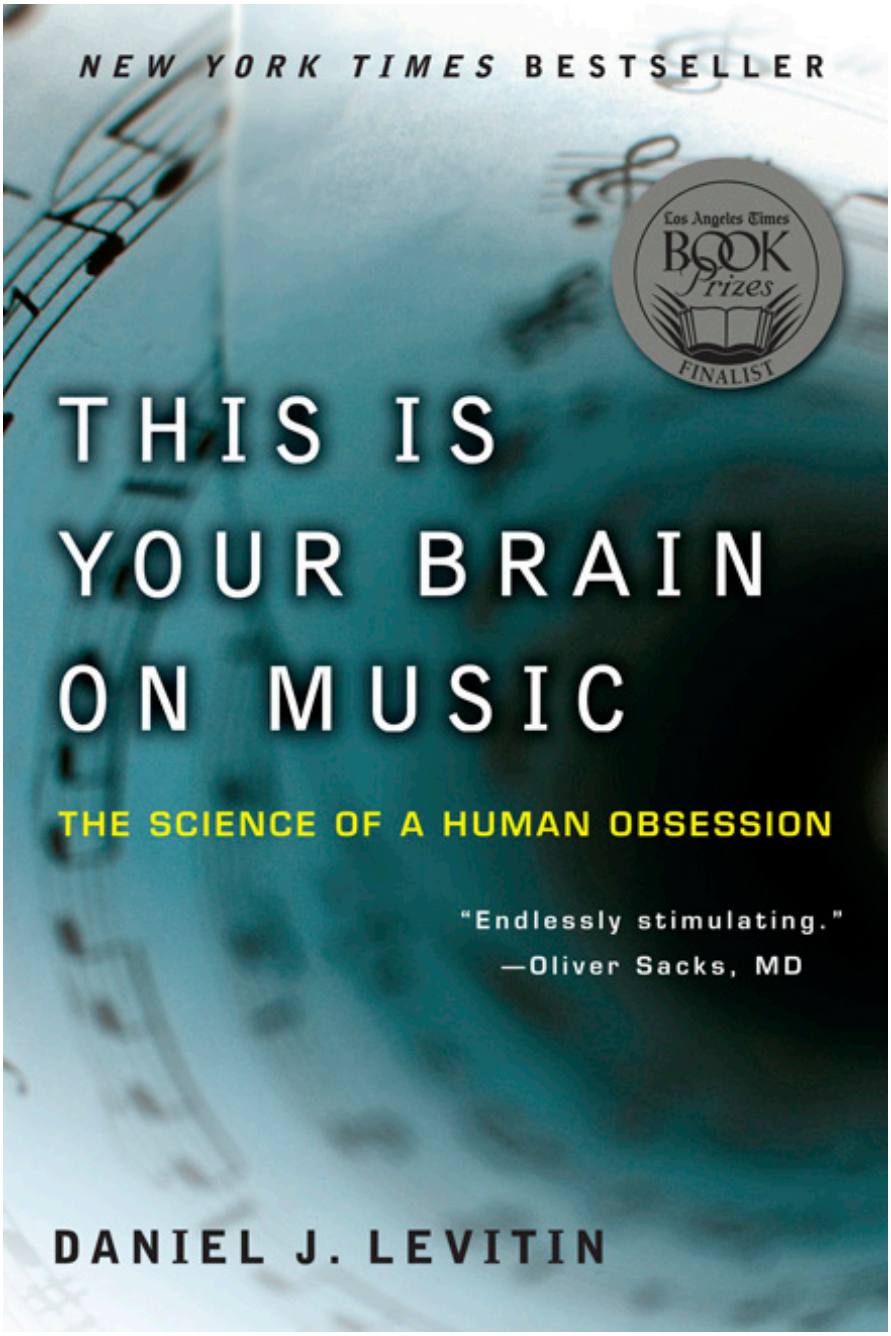
This all began in 1840, when "Tippecanoe and Tyler Too" became the most famous political song in American

history, made for William Henry Harrison's presidential campaign. From then on, a wide variety of songs have been appropriated for politics, from Frank Sinatra for John F. Kennedy's presidential campaign, to Jackson Browne for John McCain's campaign.

I think I can speak for all of us when I say that, whenever I hear the James Bond theme song, I want to become a stealthy British spy and run through crowds like I'm chasing someone. Similarly, intense and specific emotional reactions are exploited by political campaigns. Maybe politicians and their campaign teams don't mean for you to associate their campaign with covert missions and running through crowds like a maniac, but they do want you to associate the marching-band drums and bell-like guitars in the songs they choose with patriotism and, as a result, with the political candidate.

However, Barack Obama created an interesting variation of the campaign song playlist with his most recent presidential bid. Obama's most recent campaign playlist covers a wide variety of genres – from soul to classic rock to indie pop – therefore ensuring that it resonates with a large portion of the population. Chances are, if you have listened to any popular music within the last fifty years, you'll find something that you like on his playlist, containing artists as popular as Earth, Wind & Fire and as indie as Noah and the Whale. This strategy is brilliant because it doesn't make a play towards patriotism like most campaigns do. Instead, it attempts to tap into the brain's emotional centres, as explained by Levitin. If you associate at least one of the songs used in the campaign – or even a song *like* one used in the campaign – with a good memory or feeling, then it can be argued that you would have more positive feelings towards Obama as a presidential candidate, and you would therefore be more likely to vote for him over other candidates.

It is clear that music can be persuasive towards listeners in both good and bad ways. It can help rally people towards a good cause, as Bob Dylan did with his song "Hurricane," or it can heavily influence people in choosing the next leader of their country. Either way, there is nothing we can do to escape music's influencing power. The best that we can do is be aware of what may be influencing our emotions, and know how important our emotions are in making our decisions.



> "Barack Obama created an interesting variation of the campaign song playlist with his most recent presidential bid."

-Emily Scherzinger

A Brief Introduction to Toronto's Open Mic Nights

The open mic night scene in Toronto is a tad overwhelming - there are just so many of them! I will be planning to head to one and my friends will say, "No, you should go to the Supermarket, you'll totally get in, I hear it's pretty small!" (Turns out this is not exactly true). I have noticed that sometimes it is nice to have a guide for these things, so here is a sampling of three downtown open mic nights.

Aspetta

Located at 207 Augusta Avenue, this charming little café has reasonably priced drinks and a great group of talented artists. The sign-up is basically on a walk-in basis; just show up, and you will probably be taking the stage pretty soon. The piano is out of tune, but don't let that dissuade you - you can bring a keyboard and plug it into their PA system, or hope that someone else does so. I would highly recommend this place for everyone, especially those who are new to the process and might be a wee bit shy. It is a very relaxed, warm place that is not too stressful. The night starts at 8:00 PM on Thursdays, and don't feel the need to show up early. And, as it is a café, it is all ages!

The Painted Lady

The Painted Lady has a fantastic open mic night, featuring a hilarious host and a great atmosphere. It is a bar, so it is not all-ages friendly, but it is one of the coolest bars in Toronto, so for those of you deemed old enough to consume poison, definitely check it out! This one is pretty popular and so it tends to attract a wide variety of awesome talent (one of the regulars is a stand-up comedian - go see him, he is hilarious). They have a sign-up sheet that you have to go and sign before the night begins or as you show up, so if you want to get an earlier spot, going about 15 minutes early is probably a good idea. In terms of equipment, they have a house acoustic guitar, electric guitar and amp, drum kit, and bass, but no piano or keyboard (it is a hard-knock life for the pianists). Still, for one of the best open mic nights in the city, venture to 218 Ossington Avenue at 9:00 PM on Mondays!

The Supermarket

You may already know about this popular open mic night. They have a pretty intense sign-up process: on Facebook, search for "Freefall Sundays' Pre-list" and you will find all the instructions there. If you manage to emerge from the labyrinth of pre-lists unscathed, you will be part of an amazing group of individuals who earned the Supermarket its reputation as the king of open mic nights. Voice looping, beautiful songwriting, comedy, and crazy rap in languages I am not familiar with only scratch the surface of the interesting things I have seen here. It is primarily a restaurant, so it is all-ages friendly, but the bar is also awesome, and if you participate then you get a free beer (provided you are legal)! However, if you plan to just walk in, do not expect to get an early time slot - you may have to stick around for a while.

-Erik Masson

Homosexuality in Hip-Hop and R&B

Photo credit: Frank Ocean by Terry Richardson

Frank Ocean's "coming out" a day before the release of his album created a lot of commotion in the music industry. The internet went wild, which may seem crazy considering that all Ocean said was he once fell in love with another man. But we cannot forget that this is the world of hip-hop and R&B, where the phrase "no homo" is frequently used after a comment that might be considered homosexual. That is why Ocean's confession came as such a shock to many, but I feel it is about time someone stood up and shook the homophobic foundations of the genre.

Many of Frank Ocean's colleagues showed their support for the talented singer after he came out, but I wonder if Ocean would have received the same reception ten or so years ago. Touré, a CNN journalist and cultural critic, gave a description of the genre that shines some light on why homophobia is and was prevalent in hip-hop: "Hip-hop is a parade of alpha men who use the dominance of women to enhance their manhood and seem to know nothing of the concept of anima, the feminized part of masculinity." Homosexual men did not fit into the ideal of masculinity that existed. For example, the subgenre of "gangsta rap" often portrays an overly masculine world involved in violence and crime with little room for sensitivity. In an interview with the Associated Press, Snoop Dogg notes, "When I was growing up, you could never do that and announce that, [referring to Ocean's confession]…there would be so much scrutiny and hate and negativity, and no one would step [forward] to support you because that's what we were brainwashed and trained to know."

It is important to note that one cannot generalize this homophobic behaviour to the entire genre, as emphasized by the University of Toronto's Sexual and Gender Diversity Officer, Allison Burgess. There are currently many challenges and interventions working against this stereotype of homophobia characterizing hip-hop entirely. For example, Tyler the Creator uses the word "f*ggot" more often than any other rapper I have personally heard, and his rap collective, Odd Future, was even once stopped from performing at a festival in Australia because of their homophobic lyrics. However, Odd Future now has two openly gay group-mates: Frank Ocean and Syd the Kid, a publicly lesbian DJ. This acceptance suggests that Tyler is not legitimately anti-homosexual, despite the homophobic language he uses.

Additionally, beyond the mainstream rappers and singers, there are some openly waving their rainbow flags. These openly gay musicians have been recording and performing music within the hip-hop genre, and most are concentrated within New York City. Most of them prefer to perform close to home and avoid diluting their sound for mainstream popularity; however, others have found a wider audience, such as Zebra Katz, whose song, "Ima Read", earned him a whole new following and even spawned a remake by Azealia Banks. Zebra Katz has been signed by Diplo, a DJ and producer, thus exposing him to a wider audience.

The growing popularity of gay rappers could be a sign of the shift in popular opinion within hip-hop and R&B. Major stars of both genres, such as Jay-Z, A$AP Rocky, Beyoncé, Pharrell, and Jamie Foxx, have spoken against homophobia, thus setting the scene for closeted musicians to come out, and for budding gay rappers and singers to finally feel free.

Afra Foli
Afra is doing Human Geography on exchange from the Netherlands and loving every minute in Toronto. Music is one of her favourite things, second only to food, and while she listens to almost everything, there is a special place in her heart for Frank Ocean.

Westsiiiiiiiiide! *Of Toronto?*
Exploring Hip-Hop in GTA Suburbs

Photo credit: Noyz by Flavour Media

What does it truly take to be a hip-hop artist? It has been a while since the time that rap and hip-hop was just being discovered in the late '80s, a time when hip-hop was reinventing everything and people were more open to new ways to expand their culture. Of course, as always, when something as raw an art form as hip-hop becomes commercialized, things tend to get lost. Hip-hop was slowly becoming fronted as another manufactured genre that confined artists to media-based stereotypes by the late '90s.

The most notable stereotype that is argued about in hip-hop, specifically in rap culture, is the stigma attached to being a suburban rapper. This is due to the pre-conceived notion that talent and success as an artist in the hip-hop industry depends on the amount of "street cred" one has. Street cred is something only a person from the urban streets is conceived to have because of the specific experiences of struggle they most likely would encounter. But struggle can come in all shapes and forms, all walks of life, and in all different scenarios. Why then is so much bias forced onto suburban rappers and hip-hoppers? Who are these people to judge their credibility and question it on the sole basis of the artist's origin? Since when has music and especially hip-hop relied solely on what piece of the planet it comes from?

Here in Toronto, one of our most influential and successful hip-hop artists at the moment hails from the Greater Toronto Area (GTA), which of course is, in other words, the beautiful suburbs of Toronto. Drake, as he is popularly known as, has had quite the scuffle and still does have some trouble with critics not giving him full artistic credibility as a hip-hop artist. This is simply because he was partly raised in the suburb of Vaughn. If it were not for his induction into Lil' Wayne's Young Money label and therefore induction into some street cred, he probably would not have risen to such success.

The truth of the matter is that many do not realize how different Toronto's suburbs are. The GTA does have pockets of great wealth, but when inner city real estate prices are so high and families need space, living outside of the city in the suburbs is much more affordable. What we get are neighborhoods full of diverse families. Many people in the GTA suburbs have the same struggles that low-income inner city families might have in the USA. This unique spin on the rural-urban dynamic creates a whole different culture of people. The suburbs in Toronto are densely populated and also dense culturally, with a high percentage of

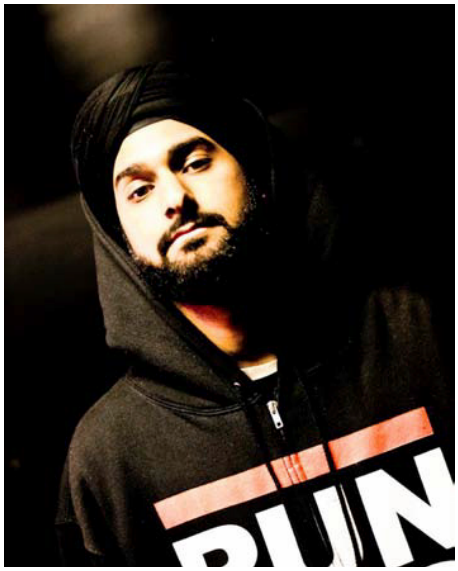


Photo credit: Noyz by Flavour Media

Photo credit: Spooks by the Sticker Kid

immigrant families living alongside everyone else. Even if you have not seen someone die, you have probably been raised on enough diverse experiences as a Toronto–GTA kid, to grow at least an understanding of the struggle, the uphill battle that the game is all about.

I sat down with two up-and-coming rappers from the suburb of Toronto known as Brampton. These well-polished men who have been doing what they love gave me some more insight into what being a specifically Brampton suburban rapper means and where the inspiration comes from, if not from the experiences of the stereotypical "hood."

in the hood, raised in the 'burbs." Born in Toronto's eastside Scarborough, his family moved to the west side of the GTA to Brampton, where he was raised. Due to this background in both urban and suburban areas, he definitely knows very well the dichotomy between urban and suburban rap.

In comparison to a stereotypical urban rapper, the very proud suburban rapper Spooks possesses a drive and unique point of view as an artist that is indeed a by-product of understanding both worlds. "My struggle is that I have everything to lose, you know? By chasing my dream…to throw a life away for [the] chase you gotta be crazy." For

The subject matter that he does rap about is universal and relatable, but distinctive in its sincerity, just as his demeanor and attitude proves. It could possibly be due to his unique point of view growing up as a child who lost his father at a young age, and grew up as the observant young sibling in Brampton's dense and diverse population. The diverse cultural exposure that living in a Toronto suburb like Brampton gives to a person prevents a one-sided point of view and using Spooks as a great example, withholds artistic pretention. Even without asking Spooks any questions about his life, the effects of living in such a diverse place can be observed simply by the diverse musical influences he shared with me, from Stevie Wonder to Nirvana to Slim Shady. It also opened him up to opportunity, like meeting up with hip-hop culture website Waffles and Beatz creator, Dusty Loops. Dusty, being an equally polished hip-hop producer, naturally gravitated towards Spooks and dare I say collaborated to create magic like Dre

> "... it is more about the story of struggle of "otherness", in any form or fashion, than it is about being from a certain geographical point on the planet."

First up on the cutting block, I met up with a rapper, producer, and musician who goes by many names, one of the more widely-known being Spooks. As one of his tracks off of his most recent mixtape, *G.I.F.T.S*, professes, he was "born

him, being from the suburbs "forces you to be creative 'cause you can't rap about the same subject matter that you're used to hearing in hip-hop. Not about drugs or the struggle to come up [in the hood]."

Photo credit: Spooks by the Sticker Kid

and Shady do. From here on, Spooks was able to become more established and collaborate with more artists and producers from Brampton – one of these being Noyz.

Choosing the name Noyz for its oxymoronic properties, the rapper and producer was born in the suburb of Malton but was later raised in Brampton. Living in the GTA his whole life, he also understands all too well the stereotypes that suburban rap has accumulated. Noyz initially became interested in the art of rap and began rapping when he was in middle school. Similar to Spooks, his parents had also immigrated to Canada and did not necessarily promote hip-hop but was specifically influenced by his older cousins.

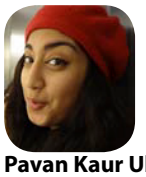
Just as Spooks does not fit into his stereotypes, Noyz definitely does not either, being born in a Sikh immigrant family. Therefore coming from a culture that seemingly has no relation to hip-hop, it is quite anomalous that a suburban kid like him related so well to hip-hop. Or is it? "[Hip-hop/rap] is something you could sit down with and really break down…it sounded really good but you could take something away from it as well." More importantly for Noyz, hip-hop and rap expressed "what it is to be a person of colour in western civilization."

That is the beauty of authentic hip-hop and art in general, that it is more about the story of struggle of "otherness", in any form or fashion, than it is about being from a certain geographical point on the planet. For Noyz, hip-hop made him "more aware of what [his] parents' story was."

"You know, my parents grew up really poor and as you grow up, you gain a better understanding of these things… helps you understand where you are now and what it took for your family or your parents to get there. That's kind of what a lot of people from suburban areas can relate to, especially in the GTA."

"Even though I talk about things happening to my family, it's still universal in the sense that if I talk about my mom working factory jobs for years, something that anybody in a similar situation can relate to, especially from the Brampton, Malton, Mississauga area…we're kind of all being exposed to the same upbringing…we were told we are the minority but you look at the schools and neighbourhoods and it's something else, so it's that sort of otherness that we have been stigmatized with and I think that's a very major theme in hip-hop."

Purists argue that because hip-hop and rap originated in the streets as a type of urban folk art that it cannot truly be deemed hip-hop when it comes from a suburban artist. But art is transient and evolves; art was never meant to be put in a box. Look at the genre of rock and the many subgenres it has appropriated - rock once started out as an art form to "stick it to the man", but it does not always have to encapsulate that value now. Tracking it down to its bare bones, music is an expression of the soul that has always been a product of human struggle. The struggle is usually a condition of where people live, but this fact does not always have to ring true. The struggle that produces the content relies on truthful expression - be it visual representation, musical representation, written or vocal manifestation. So at the end of the day when you strip it down in the dark, no one should care about anything but the honesty of your art.



Pavan Kaur Ubhi
Pavan is a second year undergraduate student at the University of Toronto majoring in Diaspora and Transnational Studies and minoring in Music and English. Born and raised in Toronto, she has been involved in music from classical to contemporary since the age of 13. She has been writing since middle school and has written for the York Excalibur, internet blogs, and her own spoken word poetry.

Looking Back at 2012: Our Favourite Albums

Now that the year is over, we asked our staff to reflect on the wide varieties of music released in the past twelve months. It is time to celebrate our favourite artists, the most startling achievements, and the records that will stay with us for the rest of our lives. Below, Demo takes you through a 2012 musical journey.

Centipede Hz – Animal Collective

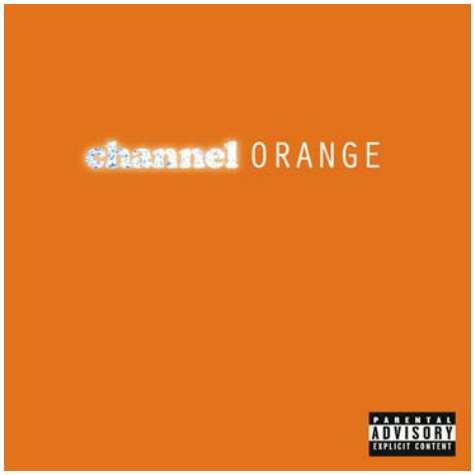
To say that Animal Collective is an acquired taste is an understatement. Never being ones to compromise their vision, the members of Animal Collective chose to take their tenth record in a direction completely different from their previous release, the critically acclaimed *Merriweather Post Pavilion*. This time around, they took on the role of an alien band, interpreting Earth music as heard via stray space-bound radio frequencies. From beginning to end, *Centipede Hz* is a glitchy, chaotic sound collage. Its dense texture makes each listen a unique experience; new sounds emerge and reveal themselves, colouring the sonic landscape. Guttural screams and aggressive chrome-tinged vocals make for a bit of an abrasive shock at first, but this album is definitely worth the multiple listens required to fully absorb all that's going on.

-Maria Sokulsky-Dolnycky

The Sheepdogs – The Sheepdogs

Ever feel like you were born in the wrong decade? Wish you could have been around for the legendary music of the '60s and '70s? Well, never fear youngins, The Sheepdogs are here! Not only do these fine young Canadian men have some seriously impressive beards, they crank out some of the best blues rock I have ever heard. You may have heard their popular single, "I Don't Know," or about their triumphant win of the Rolling Stone cover contest last year, but they are more than just buzz. Their new self-titled album, released on Atlantic Canada, totally lives up to the hype. Produced by everyone's favorite Black Key, Patrick Carney, it features 14 glorious, foot-tapping tunes, each infused with the Sheepdogs' signature Southern groove. You'll be struck by lead singer Ewan Currie's husky yet melodic vocals, the catchy guitar riffs, and drums that kick in right when you want them to. Upbeat and soulful, it's perfect music to pump you up for your day.

-Aviva Lev-Aviv



channel ORANGE – Frank Ocean

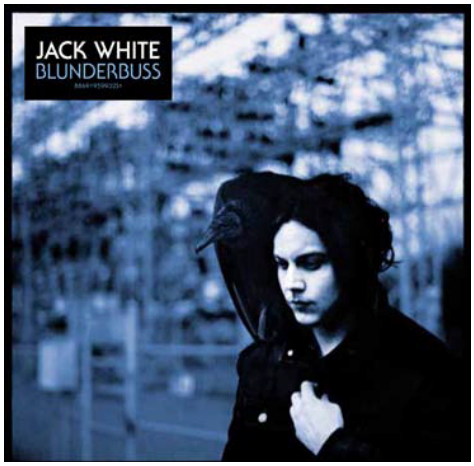
For the past three months, I have listened to *channel ORANGE* almost every single day. It is the debut album of Odd-Future member and neo-soul/R&B singer Frank Ocean. I used to have trouble expressing to others that R&B is more than empty, sex-filled songs. Frank Ocean's newest work explains that for me. The lyrics are deep and the music ranges from a gospel sound in "Bad Religion" to an electro feeling in "Pyramids". Forget genres. I'm no music expert, but this album is just plain good.

-Afra Foli

***Little Sleepwalker* – Born Gold**

My favourite record of 2011 was Born Gold's *Bodysongs,* and somehow pop experimentalist Cecil Frena has managed to take that honour again with an entirely different beast. *Little Sleepwalker* is everything that the hyped-up, glitchy, and overwhelming first album was not: flighty falsetto through layers of vocal distortion, dark and twisted in instrumentation, and full of heady imagery. This record takes club music and distorts it into an echo-y melancholia with lyrics that also serve as poetry, if you can make them out. *Little Sleepwalker* simultaneously delivers the three things that I love most in music – substantial verbal messages that feel like they could have come out of my own most private moments, unexpected turns with "weird" genre-melding, and the ability to act as a bedroom-dance-party soundtrack. Forget just 2012, this is a record I would love to lose myself in forever.

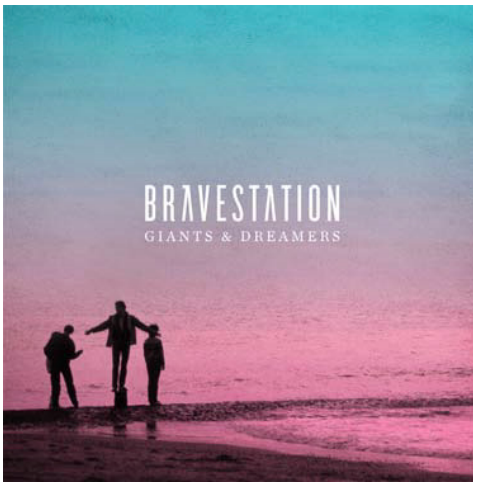
–Elena Gritzan



***Blunderbuss* – Jack White**

Although it was his gut-wrenching blues style that made me fall in love with Jack White, this departure from his usual style is equally hard-hitting. I may be getting ahead of myself, but I believe this album heralds the revival of the piano as a primary rock instrument. Songs such as "Missing Pieces", "Freedom at 21", and "Weep Themselves to Sleep" feature Jack White's distinctive, unmatchable guitar riffs flowing through driving piano arrangements. Jack's guitar even takes a back seat in songs like "Hypocritical Kiss", "Trash Tongue Talker", and "Hip (Eponymous) Poor Boy", allowing the piano to prove that it can be as ferocious as any guitar. Throughout the album, Jack shows us a glimpse of his life as he tells tales of abandonment, obsession, misery, frustration, deceit, triumph, mixed intentions, and, above all, love. White continues to produce the most honest love songs around, with "Love Interruption" and "Blunderbuss". Backing these reflections is a stunningly arranged backdrop of jazz, blues, country, and folk. And for those of you who just want to hear that guitar snarl, check out "Sixteen Saltines", "Take Me With You When You Go", and "I'm Shakin'". It's all great. Listen to all of it. Now.

-Erik Masson



***Giants and Dreamers* – Bravestation**

I have recently become interested in learning about new bands from the local Toronto music scene, so when I first heard Bravestation as the opener for Imagine Dragons at their Opera House show in September, I was ecstatic when the lead singer announced to the crowd that they are from Toronto. Of course, I became even more excited when I heard them launch into their music – along with being great performers, their new album, *Giants & Dreamers*, is phenomenal. It is a mix of tribal-like drum beats, colourful melodies, breathy vocals, and romantic, dreamy lyrics. Because of their chill, echoing sound, the band gets a lot of comparisons to the New Wave band Foals, but Bravestation proudly labels their genre as "Apocalypse Pop." If that is the case, then that's an apocalypse I could definitely get into.

-Emily Scherzinger

***The Seer* – Swans**

Swans have always maintained a fierce reputation of volume and intensity. With the exception of a few misguided folk albums in the eighties, Michael Gira and co. have always been able to astound and terrify. With 2010's *Our Father Will Guide Us Up A Rope To Heaven*, Swans firmly established that they were no mere cash-grab reunion, as they took the ardent anger of the Swans of old and paired it with the brooding melancholy of Gira's previous project The Angels of Light to great effect. On *The Seer*, Swans continue their upward trajectory with a noisy masterpiece that spans two discs and approximately two hours of running time. A musically diverse album, covering everything from a cappella ballads to obliterating half-hour droning dirges, Swans still manage to maintain a consistent level of quality despite the vast quantity of material. Although occasionally over-the-top, Gira's overtly dark and spiritual lyrics complement the bombast and ardor of tracks like "The Apostate" and "Mother of the World". This is by far the best release of 2012, and it may even be a contender for the best Swans album proper.

-Adam Bernhardt

How to Express Yourself: Fashion in Music

Photo credit: Lady Gaga Fans by Cheryl Ravelo for Reuters; Bottom

Fashion and music go hand-in-hand. Many music idols are now some of the most influential fashion icons in the world, but fashion in music is extremely varied. Artists are expected to reflect their musical style in their appearance, so styles change from rock to pop to hip-hop. As specified by Janice Miller in her book, *Fashion and Music*, "the correlation between music and fashion informs not only the creative activities that are part and parcel of these industries, but also the interests of both the existing audiences for specific brands or stars and the tastes and habits of consumers more generally." Basically, music and fashion as industries encourage each other creatively while also complementing each other materialistically.

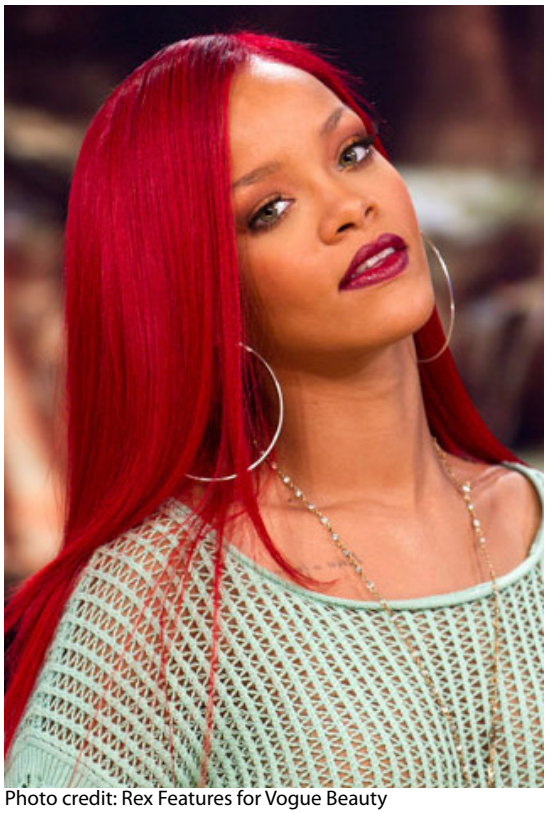


Photo credit: Rex Features for Vogue Beauty

In order to analyze fashion and music, it is important to acknowledge that music is understood in terms of genres, which in turn affects the fashion of musicians. For example, neon colours may be popular among fans of pop music, but may not be a fashion trend among punk fans. Similarly, it is doubtful there would be many fans of pop music walking around in suspenders, spiked hair, and Doc Marten's. This makes it clear that specific styles of fashion play a crucial role in making cohesive musical genres. Then, what popular artists of a certain genre wear commonly filters down to the clothing of the fans, thus causing a trend – as large amounts of fans attempt to emulate the musicians they look up to, they wear similar clothing to their favourite musicians. This can be seen in the recent resurgence of vests among folk rock and indie rock fans at around the same time Mumford & Sons became popular, as well as the sudden popularity of beards that can be credited to the blues rock band The Sheepdogs.

The connection between fashion and music is not limited to just what musicians wear – artists constantly mention fashion brands and styles in their songs. For example, in the song "Murder to Excellence" by Jay-Z and Kanye West off of their best-selling album, *Watch the Throne*, West raps, "Hit the mall, pick up some Gucci/Now ain't nothin' new but your shoes." It can be argued that fans of Jay-Z and Kanye West would be more likely to purchase Gucci clothing than fans of fellow rapper Tyler, the Creator, who is notorious for wearing t-shirts and Supreme snapbacks in his music videos.

The effect of mentioning brands and styles in music is clear: the creation of fan uniforms. In this way, fans of a specific musical genre can be distinguished and differentiated from fans of other genres based on their fashion choices. It is now easier than ever to discern an indie rock listener from a hip-hop buff.

But why is fashion so important to music? In a world where the typical work uniform is, as specified by Miller, "dark trousers and a white shirt," musicians admirably break the mould with trendy clothing such as high-waisted jeans, neon colours, crop tops, vibrant hair colours, faux-leather suits, and casual hats. Moreover, fashion is a method by which people express themselves.

Photo credit: Mumford & Sons by Spin.com

Photo credit:The Sheepdogs by Danny Clinch for Rolling Stone

"...musicians admirably break the mould with trendy clothing such as high-waisted jeans, neon colours, crop tops, vibrant hair colours, faux-leather suits, and casual hats."

Many people believe that particular fashion and musical taste define one's personality. This is supported by the fact that people with similar tastes in music are more likely to become friends. Thus, to mix fashion and musical taste in outward expression allows one to display what many consider defining aspects of personality.

With all of this said, music is ultimately understood to share the same core values despite what genre it is defined as: emotion, entertainment, and making listeners feel a sense of belonging while at the same time allowing them to distinguish themselves from others through their tastes. So, while musical taste may be expressed differently through fashion, it is ultimately used for the same purpose: to convey preference for something that evokes emotions in the listener.

-Emily Scherzinger

The Return of the Femcee

Photo credit: Lauryn Hill by George Pimentel

"Tell me, what is the plight of a female emcee's fate or what's the word of a woman's story to a DJ?" asks underground female emcee, Akua Naru, in her first single, "The World is Listening", released off her album, *The Journey Aflame*.

To respond to a sincere question like that, one must be honest. For a long while, hip-hop history, with regards to a woman's plight, had no roots. The days where female emcees like Queen Latifah, MC Lyte, Jean Grae, Toronto's own Michie Mee, and Lauryn Hill reigned the rap scene seemed long gone as of the new millennium. Even the more contemporary acts of the female emcee world that had taken over (rappers like Lil Kim, Foxy Brown, Trina, and Eve) were declining in demand by the early 2000s. This is not to say that the "femcees" became obsolete, but to merely point out that, once again, the game was about to change and the woman's word would not mean a dime in the hip-hop world.

From one perspective, blame can be put predominantly on the industry that had taken a folk art grown from oppression and transformed it into an overtly stereotypical medium. Other perspectives to why this downfall in the quality of hip-hop occurred argue that it became an extension of the oppression that hip-hop was fighting against to begin with. The racist/sexist corporations that did not want coloured people to excel in music could not fight the popularity of the genre, so they decided to penetrate it and take the wealth of quality and knowledge from it. Again, the plight of the female emcee meant pennies to the industry, or would be too costly to acknowledge. The good woman's word might have given hip-hop a conscience again.

But what's been going on now? Is there room and is there demand for the lovely ladies to re-enter the game?

To a certain extent, by the indications of what kind of artists have been coming out and coming back into the hip-hop scene, the answer is yes. Many like to accredit the "beginning of the return" to specific artists, most notably Nicki Minaj. But, in doing so, hip-hop fans make the mistake of being superficial. This resurrects the problem that occurred to emcees like Lauryn Hill in the late '90s, when the industry was forcing her into that box of what a female emcee should look like. This backlash is simply one of being confined to a male-oriented genre.

It is wiser to accredit the return of the female emcee to the overall revival of the alternative hip-hop scene. What this allowed for was not just artists like Nicki Minaj, but also artists like M.I.A who came out before Nicki but arrived later in the mainstream scene. This also meant that there was an underground influx of female rappers coming to relevance, like home-grown talent Eternia, who is an Ottawa native. This retrospective "alternative" resurgence has also opened the doors to many famous veteran artists to be given the freedom of coming back, like Lauryn Hill who has been on tour for the past two years. The list can go on as the effect of the sisterhood has started to snowball for the past few years and many opportunities are being made.

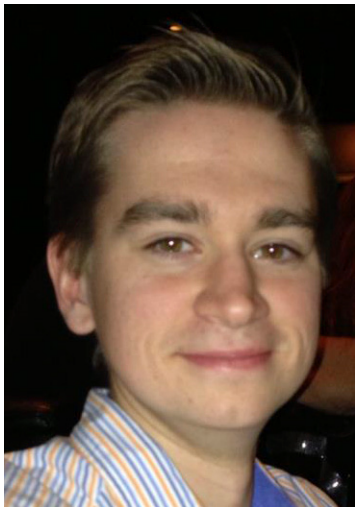
The most important factor is that there is a demand and the demand is for a voice for our ladies. Sure, we are all used to the male perspective and of course there are some amazing lyricists. But with this being said, a young lady like me experiences a whole world opening up upon hearing my own thoughts coming out of those speakers from another woman's voice.

-Pavan Kaur Ubhi

Photo credit: Akua Neru by David Dönges

Students

Cody Marcus (Computer Science/Cinema Studies):
"MK Ultra" by Muse



Steven Suddaby (Political Science/Cinema Studies):
"Fatty Boom Boom" by Die Antwoord

Melissa Clancy (English/ Urban Studies/Political Science):
"Til the End of Time" by Beyoncé

Madeleine Clark (Global Health):
"Push and Shove" by No Doubt

What are you listening to?

Faculty

Dr. Sarah Caskey (Professor of English):
"Anthem" by Leonard Cohen

Dr. Nick Mount (Professor of English, Associate Chair of the Department of English Undergraduate Studies):
"Unusual World" by King Tuff

Dr. Bruce Kidd (Warden of Hart House, Professor of Kinesiology and Physical Education):
"Why Should I Care?" by Diana Krall

President David Naylor (President of the University of Toronto):
"These Foolish Things Remind Me of You" by Aaron Neville

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